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WARNING: ATTN BANGKOK AE
ATTN BANGKOK LOCAL
SERIAL: BK2607112191
PASS: ATTN POL
COUNTRY: SRV
SUBJ: OFFICIALS GIVE "CONCRETE" PROOF OF U.S. PILOT'S DEATH
REF: BK2307120191 HANOI VNA ENGLISH 231CCC -- RADIO COMMENTS ON PHOTOGRAPH OF U.S. MIAS
SOURCE: HONG KONG AFP IN ENGLISH 1042 GMT 26 JUL 91
TEXT:

((TEXT)) HANOI, JULY 26 (AFP) -- VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES HANDED OVER TO A U.S. EMBASSY FRIDAY NEW EVIDENCE "PROVING" THAT COLONEL JOHN LEIGHTON ROBERTSON IS DEAD, A SENIOR VIETNAMESE OFFICIAL SAID HERE.

VO XUAN DICH, DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S OFFICE FOR MIA (MISSING IN ACTION) RESEARCH, TOLD AFP THAT THE TWO VIETNAMESE MILITARY DOCUMENTS WERE GIVEN TO VISITING U.S. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE KENNETH GLINN.

MR. GLINN, WHO ARRIVED HERE FROM BANGKOK ON A ONE-DAY VISIT, HELD TALKS WITH VIETNAMESE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER LE MAI ON EFFORTS TO DISCUSS CLAIMS THAT U.S. SERVICEMEN COULD BE HELD PRISONER IN INDOCHINA 16 YEARS AFTER THE WARS END.

THE MIA ISSUE WAS PROPELLED BACK INTO THE SPOTLIGHT LAST WEEK BY THE RELEASE OF A PICTURE, REPORTEDLY TAKEN LAST YEAR, SHOWING THREE MEN IDENTIFIED BY RELATIVES AS PILOTS SHOT DOWN OVER INDOCHINA IN THE 1960S -- INCLUDING COL. ROBERTSON. THE U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY SAID IT HAS SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GRAINY BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTO.

"WE AFFIRM THAT THE THREE-PERSON PICTURE IS FALSE," MR. VO XUAN DICH SAID. "WE PROVIDED SOME INFORMATION PROVING THAT MR. ROBERTSON IS DEAD."

THE NEWLY UNEARTHED EVIDENCE, HE SAID, CONSISTS OF A LOG FROM THE MILITARY COMMANDER OF HAI HUNG PROVINCE RECORDING THE CRASH OF COL. ROBERTSON'S F-4 FIGHTER-BOMBER IN 1966, SPECIFYING THAT HE WAS KILLED AND HIS CO-PILOT CAPTURED.

VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES, WHO SENT TEAMS TO SCOUR PROVINCIAL AND CENTRAL ARCHIVES FOLLOWING A REQUEST EARLY THIS WEEK FROM U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES BAKER TO INVESTIGATE THE PHOTO, FOUND A SEPARATE AIR DEFENSE DOCUMENT CONTAINING THE SAME INFORMATION, MR. VO XUAN DICH SAID.

COL. ROBERTSON'S REMAINS HAVE NEVER BEEN RECOVERED. HIS CO-PILOT WAS FREED AND RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1973. THE OTHER TWO FLYERS REPORTED TO BE SHOWN IN THE PHOTO WERE SHOT DOWN OVER LAOS.

MR. GLINN, WHO LEFT HANOI LATER FRIDAY FOR THE LAOTIAN CAPITAL VIENTIANE, SAID THE "CONCRETE INFORMATION" PROVIDED BY VIETNAM WOULD BE SENT BACK TO WASHINGTON FOR ANALYSIS.

"AS LONG AS THERE'S ANY CHANCE THAT THERE ARE AMERICANS ALIVE, WE'RE GOING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO PURSUE IT AS RAPIDLY AS WE CAN, AND WE'VE ASKED FOR HELP IN INVESTIGATING THAT," HE SAID.

THE U.S. ENVOY, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A U.S. DEFENSE

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INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ANALYSTS AND THE TWO MEMBERS OF THE U.S. MIA
OFFICE IN HANOI, GAVE VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS A COPY OF THE PUBLICIZED
PHOTO, AS WELL AS TWO OTHERS, ACCORDING TO MR. HO XUAN DICH.
BOTH ARE BLACK-AND-WHITE FILE SHOTS OF CAUCASIAN MEN, AND ONE
CONTAINS THE SAME DATE AS THAT SHOWN IN THE THREE-MAN PICTURE.
"AMERICAN SERVICEMEN'S FAMILIES ... HAVE SEEN SEVERAL PHOTOGRAPHS
AND IDENTIFIED THE MEN IN THOSE PHOTOS AS THEIR LOVED ONES," MR.
QUINN SAID AFTER AN EARLIER MEETING WITH MR. HO XUAN DICH AND LE
BANG, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S AMERICA DEPARTMENT.
"I WAS TOLD THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN STEPS TO ACTIVELY
INVESTIGATE THESE CASES, AND I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THAT."
MR. HO XUAN DICH SAID HE THOUGHT THE TWO NEW PHOTOS WERE FALSE,
BUT HE SAID VIETNAM WOULD COOPERATE IN INVESTIGATING THEM.
IN THE WAKE OF RECENT PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE IN CAMBODIA, THE MIA
ISSUE IS EMERGING AS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO NORMALIZATION OF
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM.
A MEETING IS PLANNED FOR SUNDAY IN BANGKOK BETWEEN MR. LE MAI AND
U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EAST ASIA RICHARD SOLOMON TO
DISCUSS NORMALIZATION, WHICH WOULD MEAN THE END OF A CRIPPLING 16 -
YEAR U.S.-LED TRADE EMBARGO AGAINST VIETNAM.
THE PENTAGON SAID THURSDAY THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL THREE-MAN PHOTO
COULD BE FALSE, BUT ADDED THAT NO FINAL CONCLUSION HAD BEEN REACHED.
"ONE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH LIES IN A RING OF
CAMBODIAN OPPORTUNISTS LED BY A WELL-KNOWN FABRICATOR OF POW-MIA
INFORMATION," A PENTAGON SPOKESMAN SAID IN WASHINGTON.
VIETNAM, IN AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT, CALLED ON THE UNITED STATES TO
CRITICIZE THOSE WHO FURNISHED THE PHOTO TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S. AND
VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENTS IN INVESTIGATING THE MATTER.
THE PENTAGON LISTS 2,273 AMERICAN SERVICEMEN MISSING IN
INDOCHINA, INCLUDING 1,656 IN VIETNAM, 528 IN LAOS, 83 IN CAMBODIA
AND SIX IN CHINESE TERRITORIAL WATERS.
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